

31 August 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Bunker's 18th Weekly (Saigon 4452, 30 August 1967,)

25X1

1. The bulk of this long and rather disorganized cable (48 out of 53 paragraphs) is devoted to the elections and topics immediately related thereto. The cable is difficult to read, primarily because of its lack of organization, and I do not recommend that you try, although you can flip to any paragraph at random and get the general tone and flavor.

2. Bunker's basic message is that despite all alarms and excursions, the election process is going reasonably well and, indeed, much better than might have been expected. The candidates are more or less behaving, and the nature of the free-swinging criticism that abounds gives the lie to any claims that the government is trying to railroad the show. There are bound to be some irregularities but Bunker believes these will be minor. He sees the elections (politically) as the culmination of a long and, on the whole, encouraging political process stretching back over the past 18 months. Though there are problems now and will be additional problems after the elections are held, no matter who wins, Bunker is very pleased with the process itself. He also feels, again correctly, that the election is a cause of great concern to our Communist adversaries.

3. You might want to take a look at paragraphs 14-18 in which Bunker explains that one effective measure used to counter Viet Cong anti-election efforts has been the incentive awareness system established by our Station to encourage the Vietnamese to report on the VC. As you may recall, this scheme had a number of birth pangs but has paid off. Bunker praises it highly and gives us full credit for it.

4. Despite the remarks made in the alleged Bunker cable, which Komer almost certainly wrote, earlier this week, Bunker's weekly does not raise the question of NIE 14.3 or the current Washington-Saigon debate over Communist strength figures. This is all to the good, since the situation will be easier to solve if it is brought to the President's attention after rather than before a trans-Pacific understanding has been worked out.